

Tim and the Hidden People

The Storm over the Sea

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Illustrated by Ray Mutimer



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ARNOLD-WHEATON



The three night-mares flew swiftly towards the north and west.

Tim threw back his head, and looked up at the stars. "I won't think about the stone men," he said to himself. "I'll think about nothing but flying on the night-mares." He drew in a deep breath. Flying on the night-mares was one of the most exciting things he had ever done.

Arun looked across at Tim. Arun's eyes were used to the dark now, and in the faint light of the new moon he could see that Tim was smiling. Arun was glad of that. He was feeling excited himself, but he was anxious about Tim. "But Tim will be safe, now that he has the shield stone," Arun thought. "And Alan Tremaine will be there. So shall I. But I wish I knew more about the stone men and the witches."

They flew on and on and on, across the dark moors and over the hills, until at last they saw the sea, shining in the starlight ahead of them. They came to high cliffs, and heard the sound of the waves breaking on the sands and rocks below.

The horses swung down, over the edge of the cliffs, and landed on the sand in a small cove. Sebastian jumped down on to a low rock.

Alan Tremaine slipped off the back of his night-mare, and Arun and Tim slid down on to the sands beside him.

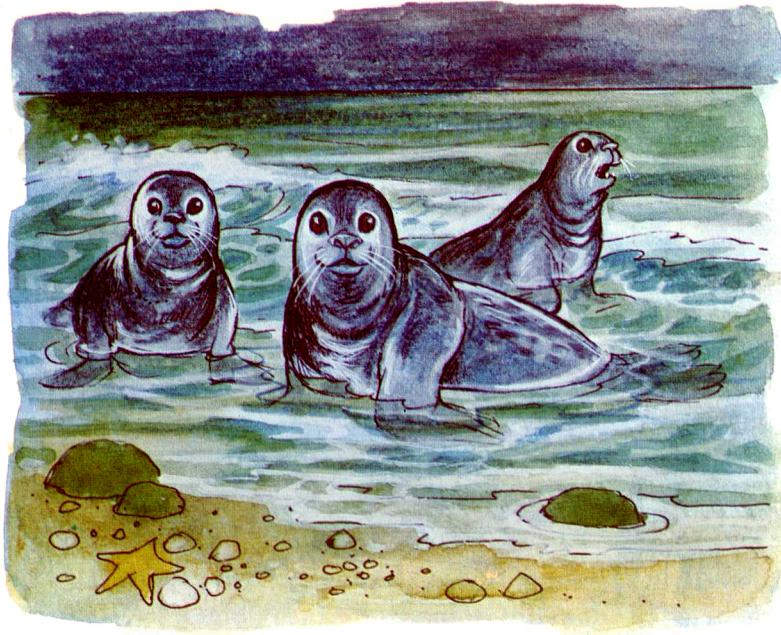
Alan slipped off the silver bridles, and the great horses spread their wings, and flew off into the night. Alan and the two boys stood on the sands, watching them go.



“Well, we’re here safely,” said Alan Tremaine. “And I saw no sign of anyone on the way. Look! Can you see the island?”

He pointed out to sea. Tim and Arun could just see an island, a long way out. It looked like a steep hill, rising out of the sea.

“That’s Diaman’s Island, where the cave is,” said Alan Tremaine. “I’ve a boat hidden here. We’ll get the boat, and row out to the island. The wind’s from the north-west, but we may be able to sail. Come on.”



As he led the way across the beach, they saw three grey shapes in the waves.

One of them gave a sharp cry, rather like a bark.

“Seals!” cried Alan Tremaine. “Good! I hoped they would come.” He called to the seals in reply.

“Seals are our friends, and they’ll come with us out to the island,” he said to the boys. “I’m glad they’re here. We may need their help.”

The seals lay in the breakers, watching them, as they made their way across the sands.



As they came nearer to the side of the cove, Tim and Arun saw a dark opening at the foot of the cliffs, on the edge of the sea. It was a big cave.

Alan had a torch with him, but he didn't switch it on until they were inside the cave. Then the beam of light from the torch lit up the flat rocks on the right of the cave, and they saw a small boat floating in a channel of water on the left. It was tied to a ring, which had been driven into the rock. Alan lifted a flat stone, hid the silver bridles under it, and turned to Tim.

“Can you row, Tim?” he asked.

Tim shook his head.

“I can,” said Arun. “We lived by the sea, before we came to live in The Yard.”

“Good,” said Alan. “I can row the boat by myself, but we’ll be much quicker with two, if we have to row out to the island. I’ll row her out of the cave, and then we’ll get the sail up, and see how much wind there is.”

Alan untied the boat, and let it swing round, until it was facing out to sea. They climbed in.

“You take the tiller, Arun,” said Alan Tremaine. “I’ll row. You go into the bows, Tim.”

He sat down, and took the oars.

Tim climbed forward, and Sebastian jumped in beside him. Arun took the tiller, and Alan Tremaine began to row the boat slowly out of the cave.

“Head for the big, pointed rock, about thirty metres out, Arun,” Alan said. “Take the boat round to the left of it, and we’ll be clear.”

The boat began to move out into the sea.

The seals were swimming about in the waves outside the cave, waiting for them. As the boat headed out to sea, they swam alongside, their heads coming up out of the waves from time to time to look at the boat.

Even in the short time that they had been in the cave, the wind had begun to blow much harder.

As soon as the boat was clear of the pointed rock, Alan shipped the oars, and pulled up the sail. He took the tiller from Arun, and the little boat seemed to fly over the water.



“Where are we going?” asked Tim, as Alan headed the boat out to sea. “We’re not going towards the island.”

“I’m going to have to take the boat far out to the left of the island,” Alan said. “We can’t sail straight for it, in this wind. We’ll sail to the south and west of the island, and then turn, and sail in with the wind.”

The little boat flew along over the dark waves. The shore dropped farther and farther behind them.

From time to time, Tim saw a seal’s head shoot up out of the water. The seals were keeping up with them, diving through the waves and swimming down under the boat.

Tim stared out over the sea. Clouds were blowing up from the north-west, and the waves seemed to be growing bigger. He could see the island clearly now, when the boat rose on the crest of a wave. It was away over to his right.

The boat was farther out to sea than the island, and Tim was wondering when they were going to turn towards it, when Alan called “Ready to go about!” and leant on the tiller.

The boat heeled over in the wind, and a wave broke over the bows. Tim was drenched in the spray.



The next wave was even bigger. The boat seemed to be running down hill, while a great wave gathered on the far side of the valley of water. It broke in a crest of white foam, and came sweeping down towards them.

Alan headed the boat into the wave, and the little boat rode up towards it. The crest of the wave broke over the bows again, and the water poured over Tim.

Tim grabbed Sebastian, and held him close, so that the wave would not sweep him away.



A great gust of wind came sweeping across the sea. The boat heeled over so far that for a moment Tim thought it would never come back.

Alan and Arun flung themselves to the other side. Slowly, very slowly, the mast rose up, away from the water.

“Take the tiller, Arun,” Alan shouted above the wind. “I’ve got to get the sail down.”

Arun gripped the tiller, while Alan Tremaine struggled with the sail. Tim tried to help, but Alan shouted at him to sit down and bale out the water.

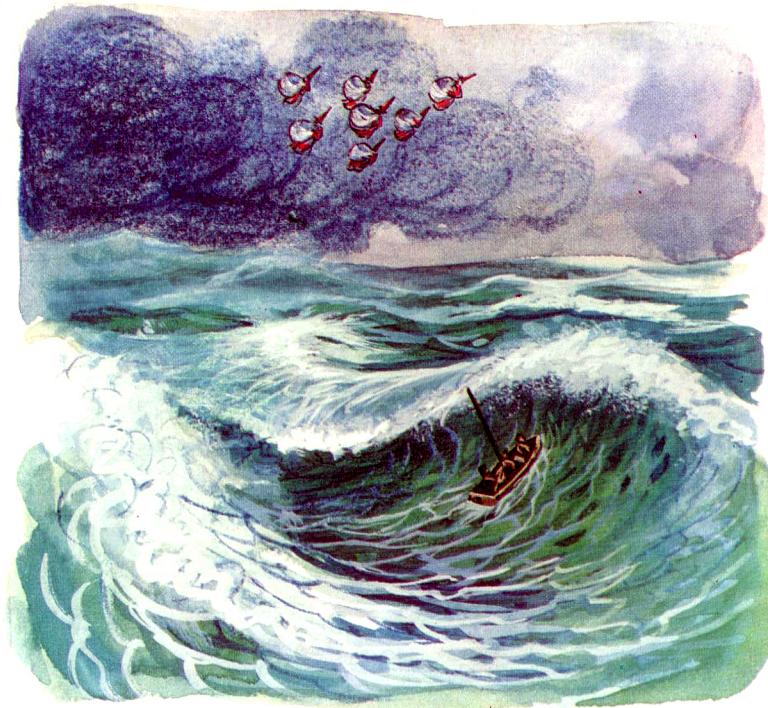
Tim saw a bowl with a handle at one side, floating in the water inside the boat. He grabbed it, and began to bale.



Another gust of wind swept across the sea. A great wave followed it.

Alan and Arun grabbed the oars, and pointed the boat's head towards the wave.

Tim saw the white crest of the water like a dark snow-capped hill above his head, and then the wave poured down over him into the boat.



As he shook the water from his eyes, Tim saw the witches. The wind witches were riding the wind over their heads, dipping and swooping down over the waves, their hair flying in the gale.

Tim cried out and pointed upwards. As he did so, another great wave rose up like a mountain in front of them, the water crashed down over them, and Tim found himself struggling in the wild sea.

As the sea broke over his head, Tim was driven down under the water. He had had no time to take a breath, and he felt almost stunned by the wave. He kicked out with his feet. Just as he felt that he couldn't last a moment longer, his head broke the surface of the sea.

He gasped for breath, and kicked with his feet. A wave caught him, and as it lifted him up, he shook the water from his eyes. He saw no sign of the boat, nor of Arun, Alan Tremaine or Sebastian. He slid down into the valley of wild water between the waves. He had just time to take a deep breath, when the next wave crashed down over his head.

Tim struggled upwards through the water again. This time, he caught a glimpse of the island, before the next wave poured over him. It looked nearer than before, and he tried to swim towards it, but it was all he could do to force his way to the surface of the sea.

He managed to ride the crest of the next wave, and again he saw the island. It was nearer still. The waves were sweeping him in towards the rocks. He could see waves breaking at the foot of high cliffs, and he wondered whether he would be smashed against the shore. Then he saw that he was being swept in towards a little sandy bay.

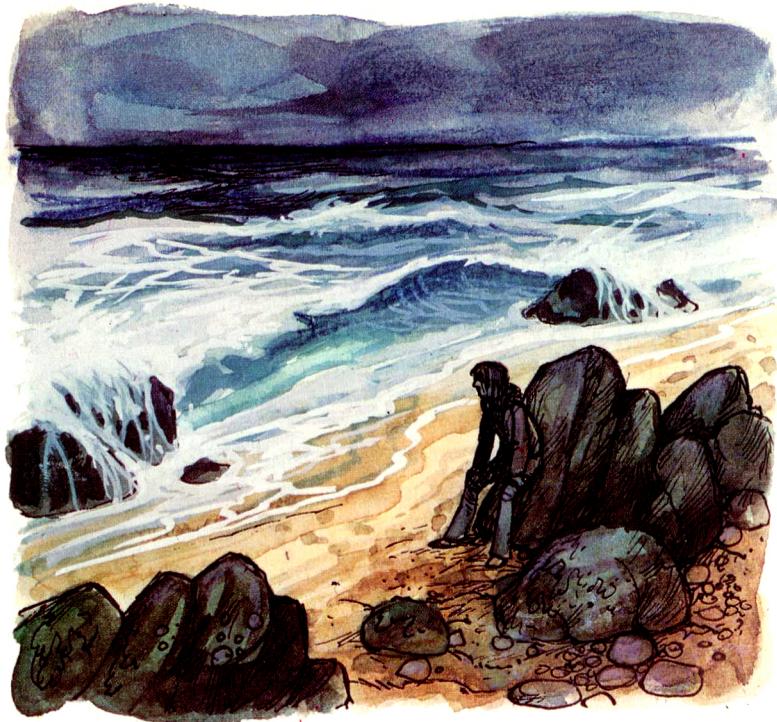
A few minutes later, his foot touched the bottom. He staggered forward as far as he could, while the wave rushed on. Then he struggled to hold his place, as the wave swept back again towards the sea.



The next wave carried him farther up the beach. Tim made a last great effort, and struggled up, out of the water and on to the sand, before the wave could pull him back.

He staggered up the beach to the foot of the cliffs, and dropped down beside a rock.

He had reached the shore of Diaman's Island.



Tim lay on the sand for a long time, shivering, but at last he pulled himself to his feet, and, leaning on a rock, he looked out across the wild sea.

The sky was beginning to grow light, and he could see the great waves sweeping in, one riding on the back of the other in a rush of white water.

But there was no sign of the boat, nor of anyone else, in the sea or on the sand.

Tim gave a dry sob. If Arun and Alan Tremaine were lost, he almost wished that he had gone under too. He let go of the rock, and dropped down on the sand again, feeling so worn out that he could scarcely move.

But then he remembered that, if they were alive, they must think *he* had been drowned. Arun could swim better than he could, and he was sure that Alan Tremaine could swim. He wasn't sure if Sebastian could save himself, but it was no good worrying, until he knew what had happened. And whatever had happened, they would want him to go on.

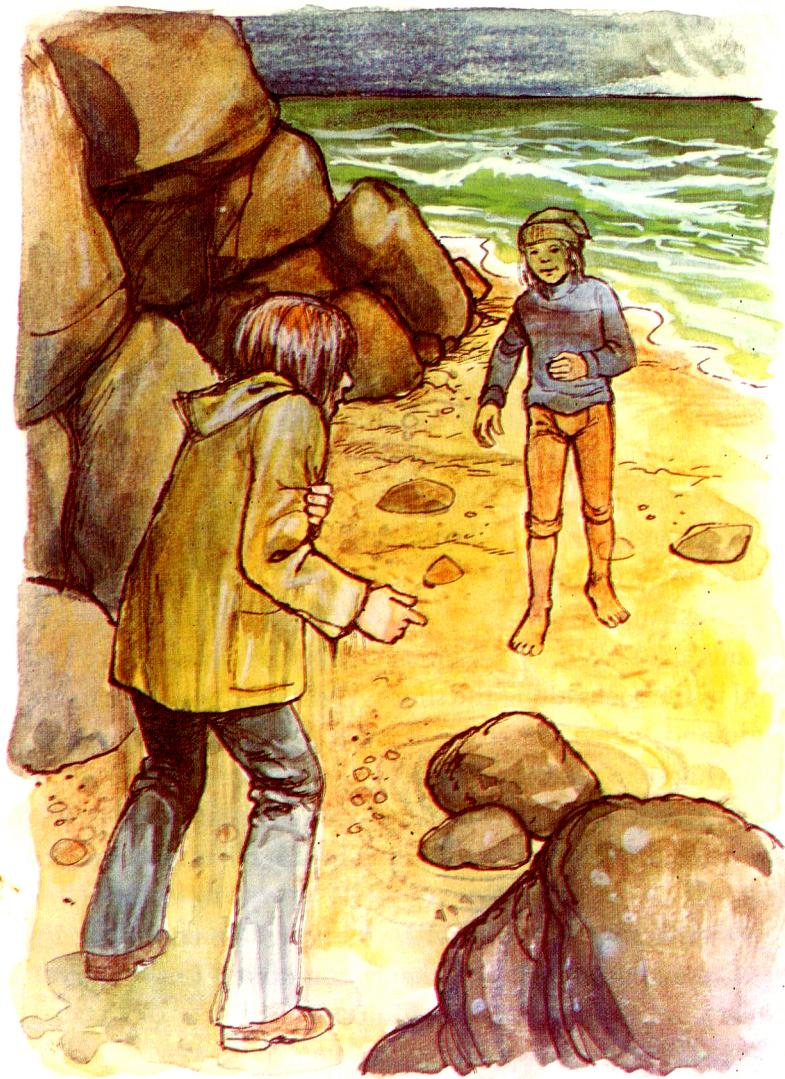
He was very wet, and very cold, and so tired that he could scarcely walk. The first thing to do was to find somewhere out of the wind, where he could rest.

He turned to go along the foot of the cliffs, to try to find a way up, and stopped dead.

A boy about his own age was coming towards him down the sands. He was dressed in a dark blue jersey, and he had a stocking cap on his head. His trousers were buckled below the knee, and his feet were bare. Tim knew at once that he must be one of the Hidden People. He stood quite still, and waited till the boy came up to him.

The boy stopped a metre or two away from him, and looked at him curiously.

“My name is Digory. I am one of the island people,” he said quietly.



“But no one lives on this island,” said Tim.

The boy nodded. “That is true,” he said. “But we were sailing by when the wind witches raised the storm, and we ran in for shelter. We saw your boat go under, and I came to see who you were. But I thought you were one of the Ordinary Folk. I didn’t think you would be able to see me.”

“*I am* one of the Ordinary Folk,” said Tim. “But I can see the Hidden People. Have you seen my friends? They were in the boat with me.”

The boy shook his head. “No,” he said. He looked at Tim’s face. “Don’t give them up,” he said quietly. “I saw the grey seals in the water. They would help them. Perhaps they have reached the mainland.”

“I’d forgotten the seals,” said Tim. “The seals were swimming with us.”

“Then they will have done their best to save your friends,” said Digory. “Come with me. We have a fire and food in the rocks along the shore. We’ll take you back to the mainland, when the storm is over. It’s dying down now. The wind witches have gone.”

Tim looked out to sea. The waves did seem smaller. The sky was light. The sun would soon be up. He turned back to Digory.

“Thank you. I’ll come with you now,” he said, “but I’ll have to stay on the island. There’s something I have to do.”

He stumbled forward and almost fell.

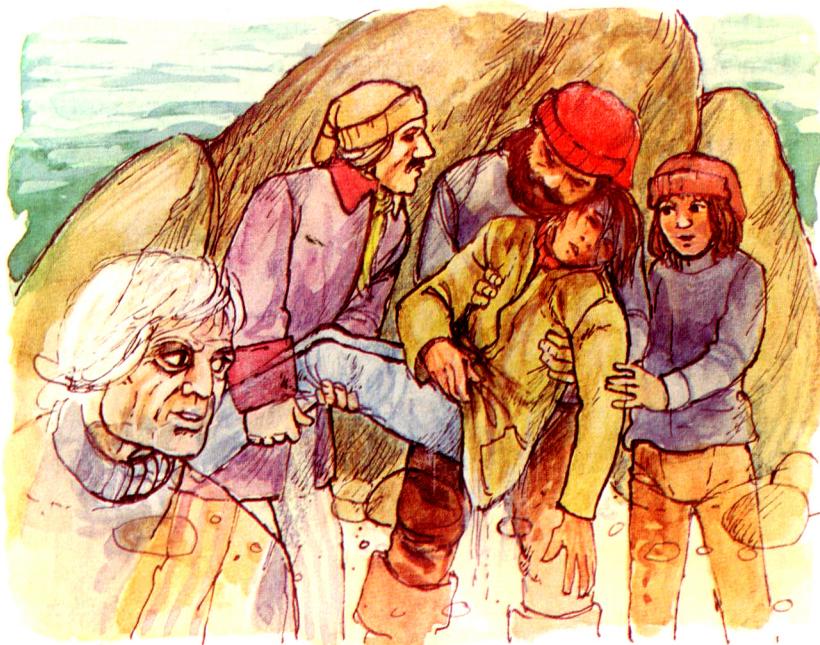
Digory caught him. He gripped Tim's wrist, and pulled Tim's arm across his shoulders. He put his other arm around Tim's waist, and they set off together, very slowly, over the sands.



Digory knew a way between the rocks on the other side of the cove, and he helped Tim towards it. They clambered slowly along.

As soon as they were on the far side of the point, Tim saw the fire. It was in the entrance to a cave at the back of another little beach, and it was hidden from the sea by a great rock.

There were three men by the fire, and as soon as they saw the boys, they ran forward to help.



Tim felt himself lifted up in strong arms. The men carried him across the sands, and laid him down gently by the fire.

He was shivering with cold now, and his teeth were chattering.

“Give the boy a hot drink, Bec,” said one of the men. “It’s cold in that sea.”

Tim struggled to sit up. The man called Bec put an arm round his shoulders, and held a cup to his lips. Tim took a drink. He didn’t know what was in the cup, but it tasted like some kind of soup. He took another drink.



The first man kicked the fire, and the flames shot up. Tim felt the warmth blow over him.

“Thanks,” he said. He took the cup from Bec, and sat up and opened his anorak.

“We’ll get that jersey off, and I’ll dry it,” said Bec. “There’s a dry one in the boat, Digory, under the hatch. Slip off and get it.”



Digory ran off down the beach. He came back in a few minutes, with a heavy, dark blue jersey.

Tim took off his anorak. He pulled his soaking jersey over his head, and held it out to Bec. But Bec didn't take it. He had been kneeling down by Tim, but now he got to his feet, and backed away from him, staring.

Tim looked quickly at the other men. They were standing quite still, staring down at his belt.

Tim looked down. The little silver flask was still there. The light was still dim, but the little flask was shining brightly, with its own silvery light.



Tim looked up into the eyes of the oldest of the three men. His eyes were very deep set, and very dark, and he was looking at Tim sternly.

“Who and what are you?” he demanded.

Tim stared back at him. The man’s look was no longer friendly. His face was deeply lined, and his white hair blew back in the wind. But Tim felt that he could trust him. He struggled to his feet.

“Do you – do you know Grandfather Strome?” he asked.

The old man started.

“What do you know of Duncan Strome?” he asked.

“He’s a friend of mine,” said Tim. “His grandchildren lived in the south – till the wind witches came.”

“The wind witches took his daughter,” said the old man.
“But the children escaped. Well?”

He looked at Tim more closely.

“One of the Ordinary Folk helped them to escape to the north,” said one of the men. Tim saw that he had a scar on his face.

He nodded.

“Was it you?” asked the older man.

Tim nodded again.

“What’s your name?” asked the man with the scar.

“Tim.”

The older man stepped forward. He put his hands on Tim’s shoulders, and looked into his eyes.

Tim swallowed hard, but he looked straight back at the man. After a few moments, the man dropped his hands, and stepped back.

“The boy is telling the truth,” he said, in a friendlier tone. “I always know if someone lies. Well, Tim – what are you doing on Diaman’s Island, with a flask of silver water?”

“The flask’s empty,” said Tim.

“Then you’ve come for the water. Why?” demanded the older man.

“You know Nicola and Jeremy?” asked Tim.

The man nodded.

“The stone men have put their father and mother in the stone prisons. I need the silver water to set them free.”

“You’re going into Diaman’s Cave? You’re going to break the silver web?” cried Bec.

“I’m one of the Ordinary Folk,” said Tim. “I can get the water.”

“You can break the web, but there is still the spider who spins it,” said the older man grimly. “Well, Tim, we shall not stop you, if you go to the cave. But we dare not help you. Diaman has too much power over us. He is one of the strongest of the Hidden People. We dare not take you in our boat, when you have stolen silver water from his cave.”

“Will you take a message to my friends?” asked Tim.
“And will you tell me where the cave is?”

The older man stood looking at him silently for a moment. Then he slowly nodded his head.

“Yes,” he said. “I will do that for you – and for Duncan Strome and his family. The cave is at the northern end of the island. You can climb up the cliffs here. At the top of the cliffs, you will find a path. The path will lead you to the cave.”

“Thanks,” said Tim.

“Aren’t you afraid?” asked Bec.

“Yes,” said Tim. “But I have to do it.”

“Sit down and have some food, boy,” said the older man. “You’ll need it. Come to the fire, and keep warm.”

Tim dropped down on the sand again, and held out his hands to the fire. He picked up the heavy, blue jersey, which was lying in the sand. He put it on and pulled it down over the little silver flask. It was thicker than his own jersey, and he began to feel warmer. He drank the rest of the soup.

“Give him something to eat, Rarn,” said the older man.

The man with a scar on his face bent down to a black pot by the fire, and ladled some fish and potatoes on to a plate. He handed the plate to Tim.

“You sleep here by the fire, boy,” said the older man. “Sleep here all day. You can only go to Diaman’s Cave at night. You can’t see the web in the daylight, and you must break the web to get in.

“We’ll leave you here. We’ll not stop you going to the cave, but I don’t want to be on the island when the web is broken. So goodbye, and good luck go with you.”

“Thank you,” said Tim. “And thank you for the food. If you meet my friends, tell them I’m here. Wait! I’ll take off the jersey.”

“Keep it,” said Rarn. “It’s thicker than yours, and it’s cold at night, here on the islands. No – don’t take it off. Keep it.”

“But . . .” Tim began.

“Keep it,” said Rarn. “It’s yours. Duncan Strome and his family come from the island where I live.”



The older man held up his hand.
“Goodbye, Tim,” he said again. He turned and walked away, down towards the sea.
The others picked up their things, and followed him.
Tim stood up and watched them go.
They disappeared among the rocks.

Tim saw a pile of wood near the fire. He tossed some on to the flames, and spread his wet anorak over a rock to dry. He was just going to lie down beside the fire, when he heard someone running back.

He turned round, and saw Digory. Digory had a long club in his hand. He held it out to Tim.

“You’ll need this, Tim,” he said. “You can break the silver web with it. And you can smash the spider that spins the web. But watch out for that spider. It’s dangerous.”

“Thanks,” said Tim. He took the long club. “Thanks, Digory, very much. Can I give it back to you afterwards?”

“Leave it with Gareth and Fiona – if you ever see them,” said Digory. “They’ll get it to me.”

Tim nodded. Gareth and Fiona were the people in the stone prisons.

“Gareth is my uncle,” said Digory.

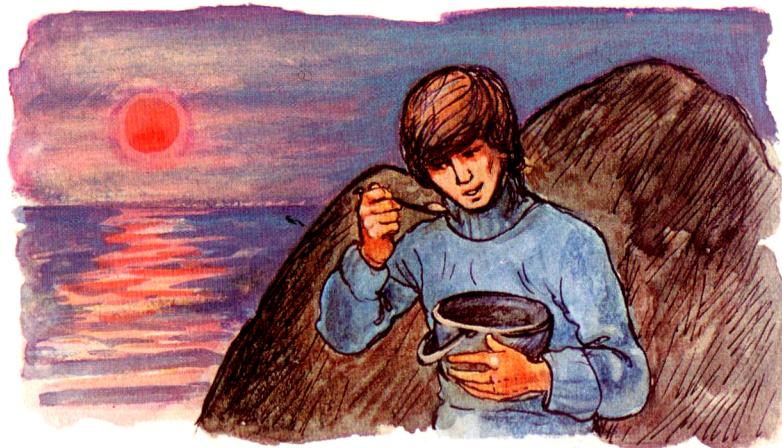


Before Tim could say any more, Digory turned, and ran back down the beach.

Tim looked at the club. It had a long handle, with strange carvings on it, and a heavy knot at the end. He set it down beside the fire. Then he piled more of the wood on to the fire, and lay down himself.

The sun was coming up. He could rest until evening. He felt very tired. He closed his eyes, and fell asleep.





When Tim woke, the sun was beginning to set. He scrambled to his feet, and looked about him. Digory had left the black pot near the fire. Tim looked into it. There was a kind of fish stew in it, with potatoes. A spoon lay beside it. Tim picked up the spoon, and ate every scrap of the stew.

Then he went down to the sea, and splashed his face and washed his hands in a pool in the rocks. He went back to the ashes of the fire, and picked up the club. He felt much better.

His old jersey lay on a rock, but it was still wet, and he decided to leave it. He hid it under a stone. He picked up his anorak, which was nearly dry, and put it on.

He took a last look around the cove, and then made his way over the sand to the cliff.



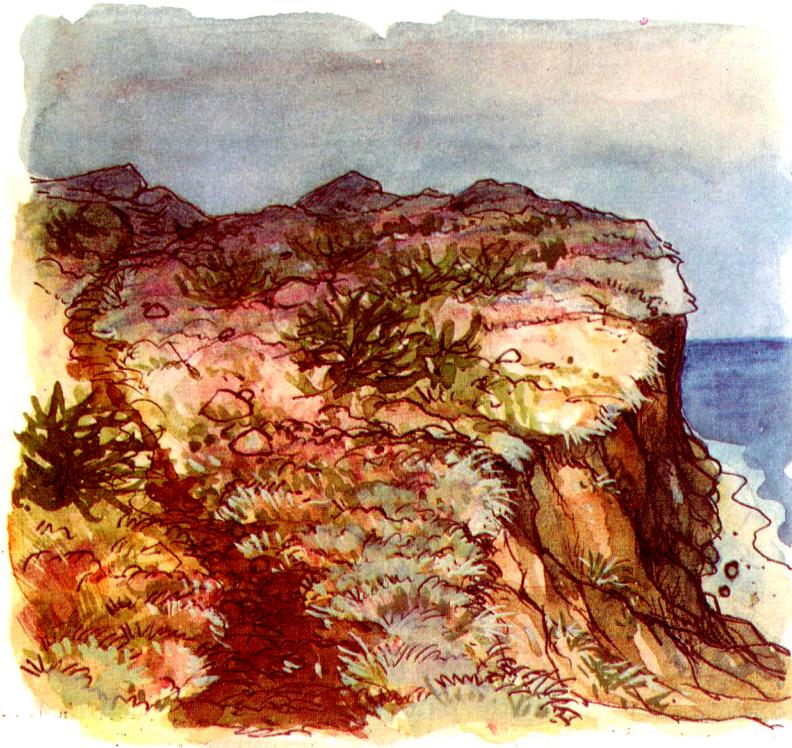
Tim found the way up, without any trouble. It was steep, but it wasn't difficult. He climbed up quickly, scrambling from rock to rock, holding on to the heather that grew in thick patches on the cliff.

When at last he came out on the top, he stood up, and looked all around him.

He was standing on a wild moor, with heather and gorse bushes. He could see the path quite clearly. It began a few feet away from him, and ran across the moor.

Tim looked carefully all around him. There was no one in sight. He looked down along the beach below as far as he could, but there was no sign of a boat. If Arun or Alan Tremaine had landed on the island, they would have found him by this time. He would have to go on alone. He must just hope that the seals had saved them.

Tim swallowed hard. He turned his back on the sea, and set off across the moor.



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Flightpath to Reading D4



E-G

